



Cumberland County
Office of the District Attorney

David J. Freed
District Attorney

For Immediate Release

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Today the ACLU issued a report to the media and other entities criticizing the civil forfeiture practices of my office. This report was not sent to me despite my office's lengthy cooperation with this "investigation". I use the term investigation in quotes because in law enforcement we don't pre-determine the outcomes of our investigation as the ACLU did here.

I want to be crystal clear about my response: this criticism absolutely confirms that my office is doing an effective job going after drug activity. It is an honor to be singled out by the criminal apologists at the ACLU. I am proud of my record and the hard work of my office. We follow the law of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and do so effectively.

I have not had a chance to review the report in depth and will likely have more to say when I do. However there are important points that need to be made.

First and foremost, as to the misleading headline on the ACLU's press release: we have in fact seized and forfeited video game systems. The video game systems that were seized and forfeited are kept for use in our victim services area. They are used most often by children who are victims of crime or are the children of adult victims of crime. They are certainly not used by police officers or my employees. If that's a criticism I don't understand it. Maybe the ACLU should come in here and watch a victim of child sexual abuse deal with his or her trauma if they disagree. I would have been happy to share this information with the ACLU employees but they did not ask. Why ruin a good headline?

The amount of forfeiture proceeds in the budget of my office is a reflection of the priority we place on making Cumberland County an uncomfortable place for drug dealers to operate. Our forfeiture proceeds pay for among other things the salary of the head of our Drug Task Force, police overtime, forensic (drug) lab supplies and naloxone to save the lives of overdose victims to name but a few.



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What the ACLU report does not say is that drug prosecutions and forfeitures are kept completely separate in my office, which is unusual for an office of our size but shows the priority we put on making sure the cases stand or fall on their own merits.

As for calling my practices racist, I am finishing my 10th year as DA. I have been called every name in the book. So I am way past being offended by that. We take our cases as they come. Plain and simple. While there may be societal reasons for the so-called disproportionate representation of African Americans, there are not law enforcement reasons. We attack drug dealers and try to treat addicts. That's the philosophy. Criminals come in all forms.

There are currently good faith negotiations taking place regarding potential changes to Pennsylvania's forfeiture laws. As a leader in the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association I have been at the table for those talks. I will continue to participate in this important process along with my colleagues to ensure that we have the tools to keep our communities safe. I will continue to do the right thing for the right reasons – every day.